

THE 5TH ASIA-PACIFIC TRIENNIAL OF CONTEMPORARY ART

2 DECEMBER 2006 – 27 MAY 2007
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Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art

THE CHANGING ART MUSEUM APT5 TOUR

TEACHERS' NOTES

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SUBJECT AREAS

Political Studies; English; Modern History

STUDENTS ATTENDING THIS TOUR SHOULD COME AWAY WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF:

- the role of the art museum in displaying and collecting art
- how artists interpret the specifications of a concept such as the Nasubi Gallery to engage with their work in new ways
- the connections between the works in the curated Nasubi Gallery project and the work of individual artists in the exhibition.

INTRODUCTION

It is sometimes commented that artists 'think outside of the square'. Tsuyoshi Ozawa's Nasubi Gallery literally exists outside of the traditional parameters of making and displaying art. This tour is based on Ozawa's concept of the Nasubi Gallery, which was developed in the early 1990s in response to the difficulty for emerging artists to show their work in the increasingly expensive Tokyo contemporary gallery district. Ozawa chose to open his own gallery, using the format of the traditional Japanese milk box. The Nasubi Gallery is a parody of the once popular Nabisu Gallery in Tokyo. The project opened up many opportunities for Ozawa to display his work and that of his colleagues and other artists. Ozawa extended an invitation to selected artists in APT5 to create their own mini-exhibition as part of the New Nasubi Gallery project. There are 28 works presented in the exhibition. This tour will take students to view the APT5 artists' Nasubi galleries, and then to the artists' other works in the exhibition.

HINTS FOR THE TOUR

Encourage students to keep in mind certain aspects of an artist's work in the Nasubi Gallery project (such as their techniques, or imagery used) to explore when viewing the artist's other works in APT5.

Ask the students to comment on the artists' different uses of the Nasubi Gallery box structure (e.g. do some artists work within the structure, and others move outside of the box?)

How does the Nasubi Gallery project comment on traditional approaches to displaying art?

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Visit the APT5 website to use the specially-developed online Nasubi Gallery interactive in the classroom before or after visiting the exhibition to introduce students to concepts of making and displaying art. www.asiapacifictriennial.com

TEACHERS' NOTES

GoMA GALLERY 1.2

TSUYOSHI OZAWA

JAPAN B.1973

Ozawa graduated from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music in 1989, when the level of media saturation in Japanese consumer culture was profound and a sense of malaise settled in after the collapse of an economic 'bubble' during the 1980s. Traditional media such as painting appeared insignificant and irrelevant in the face of sophisticated, powerful and ever-evolving media culture. Feeling at odds with and critical of the vacuous nature of art as commodity, Ozawa found a focus in travelling and backpacking. The resulting social interaction of travel provided him with a more authentic context through which ideas could be explored.

Ozawa began the Nasubi Gallery project in April 1993. Inspired by the Neo Dadaist Organisers, a Japanese avant-garde fluxus-related group of the 1960s who took their performances to the streets, Ozawa created what has been dubbed the smallest gallery in the world, comprised of the space inside a milk box. The adaptation of the traditional Japanese milk box, which was in use up to the 1970s for the daily delivery of milk, was initially a vehicle for achieving his aim of making art that was more relevant to a broader audience.

Rejecting the 'gallery for hire' system where artists have to pay prestigious galleries for space, Ozawa used these boxes as mini exhibiting places for individual artists. The word 'nasubi', which means eggplant, is a parody of the famous Nabisu Gallery in Tokyo's Ginza area, where there are many established galleries. Ozawa held the first Nasubi Gallery exhibition in front of Nabisu's established commercial premises. For his subsequent showings and for APT5, Ozawa had invited artists to make art objects for the wooden milk boxes.

The works produced by the artists indicate a variety of responses to the pre-established format of the milk box, from the combination of found objects and materials by eX de Medici, for example, to its simple transformation into a medical cabinet by Justine Cooper.



Is Ozawa the artist or the curator of the Nasubi Gallery?

Ozawa often installs his Nasubi galleries in places outside, such as on the street front and outside bookstores. What changes when Ozawa takes the Nasubi Gallery outside of the art museum?

What are some of the different techniques that the APT5 artists have employed when making their Nasubi Gallery? Which artists have contained their work inside the box? Which artists have decorated the entire structure? What are the effects of these different approaches?

Tsuyoshi Ozawa Japan b.1965 / New Nasubi Galleries
by Eko Nugroho, Finau Mara and Hong Hao 2006 / Mixed
media / 33 x 19.6 x 14.2cm (each) / Collection: Each
participating artist

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Yang Zhenzhong China b.1968 / *Light and easy no. 5* 2002 / Type C photographs, ed. 8/10 / 120 x 79.3cm / Purchased 2005. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

GoMA GALLERY 1.1
YANG ZHENZHONG

CHINA B.1968

Yang Zhenzhong is a leading practitioner of digital video and photography in China. A graduate of fashion design at the Zhejiang Institute of Silk Textiles in 1990 and oil painting studies at the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou in 1993, Yang began experimenting with video and photography as these media became available to Chinese artists in the 1990s.

Yang turns abstract notions of progress and convention into images which comment on contemporary life. He is one of many Shanghai-based artists using digital media to reflect on the city's rapid urbanisation and cultural change. Whether capturing the new individualist ethos of Shanghai's burgeoning middle classes, exploring existential questions or reworking communist visual culture to express present-day anxieties, Yang employs his signature sense of humour and the absurd. He uses video and photography with digital effects to create conceptual games and singular parabolic images. Objects of social status and markers of Chinese identity are set loose from their everyday meanings, and subjected to ironic comment and playful reevaluation. His work creates moments of reflection on cultural pasts and futures in a fast-moving present.

Yang cites his irreverence and striking visual humour as being inspired by Buddhist thought. He explores the general through the anecdotal, and uses humour to reflect on deep personal and cultural anxieties. His practice is driven by an interest in mediating specific and local experiences, and connecting them to universal readings. By changing the way we see objects, places and commonplace behaviours, Yang's videos and photographs liberate us all – if only for a moment – from the most futile aspects of contemporary urban life.

How does the act of photographing something change how we think about it? Think, for example, about the types of objects that Yang photographs and their symbolism in a fast-paced society. Does photographing something capture it in a specific time?

Compare this with Yang's Nasubi Gallery work, where we see our actions looking back at us.



Dinh Q Lê Vietnam b.1968 / *Lotusland* (detail) 1999 / Fibreglass, polymer, wood and synthetic polymer paint / 27 components ranging from 30 x 57.5 x 52.5cm to 77.5 x 55 x 45cm / Purchased 2006. The Queensland Government's Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

GoMA GALLERY 1.1
DINH Q LÊ

VIETNAM B.1968

The Vietnam–US War (1959–75) and its complex history of violence are often filtered through photojournalism and imagery from Hollywood films. The work of Dinh Q Lê disrupts these representations by giving voice to the Vietnamese people who have lived through the conflict and whose lives have been irrevocably transformed by the effects of war. Using photography, sculpture, video and installation, Lê creates poignant statements about the impact of historical events on individual lives. Lê never sensationalises the trauma of his subjects, but rather presents an optimistic view of how cultures survive their experience of history.

In 1977, the Khmer Rouge invaded Lê's hometown of Ha-Tien in North Vietnam. His family became refugees and, while attempting to escape to Thailand by boat, Lê was separated from his siblings who were left behind. He remained in a Thai refugee camp for a year, before being granted asylum by the United States, where he later studied at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Lê uses frameworks from Western art history to engage with the sense of trauma and displacement that surrounds his biography. In the early 1990s, Lê returned to Ho Chi Minh City where he continued his exploration of Vietnamese cultural identity, the legacies of war and the country's aspirations for progress.

During the late 1990s, Lê focused on the disturbing physical and psychological effects resulting from the use of chemical defoliants during the Vietnam–US War, effects that still permeate the cultural memory and landscape of Vietnam. Lê interweaves history, myth and popular culture in an effort to confront the instability of memory and questions of accountability that emerge from histories of conflict. His transformations of everyday materials and objects function as a kind of *memento mori* and stoic memorial to a violent history.

As an installation, we can walk around this work to see each of the objects from a variety of positions. How is this different from the 'box' installation of Lê's Nasubi Gallery?

Do you think the installation changes how we interact with the work?

TEACHERS' NOTES



Eko Nugroho Indonesia b.1977 / *Trick me please* 2006 / 181 x 153.5cm (Irreg.) / Machine embroidered rayon thread on a fabric backing / Purchased 2006 / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

GoMA FOYER + GALLERY 1.1

EKO NUGROHO

INDONESIA B.1977

Eko Nugroho makes paintings, installations, magazines, embroideries and murals in the city of Yogyakarta in central Java, Indonesia. A member of the young generation of Indonesian artists, his pungent, funny and independent art is acutely attuned to contemporary events. Eko Nugroho's major mural for APT5 is situated in the foyer of the Gallery of Modern Art and a second mural is on the lower level at the Park Entrance, near the Children's Art Centre.

Nugroho's embroideries are inspired by punk-culture motifs and youth clothing designs. He works in collaboration with a group of men from Tasik Malaya in West Java, who are professional machine embroiderers and who usually embroider caps or patches. These cartoon-like images show the irreverence with which many young Indonesians regard the political elite. Their speech balloons parody the rhetoric used by many public figures. Here, the intended pious sentiments are turned into biting dialogues that reveal the absurdity of contemporary life: 'Say hello and smile to your neighbour' is answered by 'Believe no body trust you'; 'We are celebrating our Independence day' leads one character to ask, 'Did you still have food?'; and in a barren landscape a figure asks, 'Who will be responsible for this?', and the reply is 'Nobody'.

Nugroho draws on sources including dada-like photo-collage, Pop art and the counter-cultural comics of American Robert Crumb. From 2000 to 2005, he published *Daging Tumbuh* (Diseased Tumour) — a series of photocopied magazines for which he collects comics, drawings and collages from artists in Yogyakarta and beyond. Its anarchic variety speaks to the vitality and social engagement of young Indonesian artists. All eleven issues of *Daging Tumbuh* may be viewed in the Research Library.

Consider the scale of this embroidered work. How does the artist play with the idea of scale? Compare the large scale of Eko's mural projects displayed in APT5 in contrast to the small sizes of the other embroidered works in this gallery space.

What limitations does the scale of the Nasubi Gallery box provide for artists such as Eko Nugroho? How did the artists sometimes extend their work beyond the size of the box? What effects did this create?